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AUTHOR Jarrow, Jane; And Others

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ABSTRACT

This booklet is designed to help college-bound students with disabilities organize the selection and decision-making processes in their search for an appropriate college. Topics discussed include taking stock of one's skills and abilities, setting long- and short-term goals, determining the availability of specific support services, determining access to extra-curricular programming, establishing timelines for college assessment, and questions to consider in the final stages of selection. (PB)

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HOW TO CHOOSE A COLLEGE:

Guide for the Student with a Disability

EC 231552

A Joint Project of THE ASSOCIATION ON HANDICAPPED STUDENT SERVICE PROGRAMS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
and THE HEATH RESOURCE CENTER

HEATH Resource Center

The HEATH Resource Center operates the national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with handicaps as a program of the American Council on Education. HEATH is an acronym for Higher Education and Adult Training for people with Handicaps. Support from the United States Department of Education enables the Center to serve as an information exchange about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities on American campuses, vocational-technical schools, adult education programs, independent living centers, and other training entities after high school. The Center gathers and disseminates this information so that handicapped people, if they choose, can develop their full potential through postsecondary education and training.

The HEATH Resource Center can be reached at One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036-1193. In the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area (202) 939-9320. Outside the Washington, DC Area toll-free (800) 54-HEATH — both numbers are Voice TDD.

AHSSPPE

The Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Post secondary Education (AHSSPPE) is a national, nonprefit organization of persons from all fifty states, Canada, and other countries committed to promoting the full participation of individuals with disabilities in college life. Since AHSSPPE began in 1978 its membership has grown to over 650 individuals from more than 425 institutions. The Association has sponsored numerous workshops and conferences which have focused on common problems and solutions in upgrading the quality of services available for handicapped students within postsecondary institutions. The Association can be contacted at AHSSPPE, PO Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221, (614) 488-4972 Voice TDD.

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If you are a high school student with a disability who is beginning to think about where you would like to go to college, this booklet is for you. There are lots of guides and manuals available in bookstores telling the average student "How to Choose a College" — ***And all of Them Apply to You!!!*** The fact that you have a disability and therefore have some special needs does not alter the decision-making process for choosing a school. You must consider all the same things that every other student considers in making this decision — plus a few more! This booklet is designed to help you organize your search and your decision-making. The idea is to maximize your chances of being successful and happy in your college career!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET:

1) Read the booklet once all the way through so that you will understand what it covers and how it is organized.

2) Read the booklet a second time through with pencil and paper at your side. Make notes to yourself as you go along. Answer the questions about your interests and your needs.

3) Give the booklet to your parents and ask them to read it, too. They are likely to be the ones giving you the most advice as you make a decision about college. Let them share with you the task of answering the questions in this booklet, so that they can help you to bring your search to a successful conclusion.

4) Start early! Ideally, you should begin thinking about where you would like to attend college no later than the middle of your junior year in high school. If you start much before then, you will not yet have the answers to some of the questions regarding your own academic preparation that may influence your decision (your grades, SAT or ACT scores, etc.). If you start much later than the middle of your junior year, you will have a difficult time collecting all the information you need about each campus in order to make your decision.

INTRODUCTION

"I Have a Disability, Where Should I go to College?"

If you have been asking yourself (and those around you) this question, this booklet is for you. This booklet was written to give students with a disability an organized approach to making one of the major decisions in their lives. The question in bold print given above can not be answered because it is misdirected. It makes the assumption that the decision to attend a given institution should be based on one's disability. That puts the emphasis on your status as "disabled," rather than your status as an academically qualified, potentially successful ***Student*** who happens to have a disability. Do not allow your disability to become the major influence in your life; keep it in its proper perspective. If you are to choose an institution where you can be successful and happy, you must consider any disability-related special needs you may have, but those needs are just one part of a much larger list of considerations to be made.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE NOW INCLUDED ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Twenty years ago, a student with a disability would have needed to ask the question above — "Where can I go to school if I have a disability?" At that time, the number of colleges and universities which were wheelchair-accessible was few, the number willing and able to provide interpreters was limited, and academic accommodations for a student with a learning disability was unheard of. Thanks to a series of legal rulings and to many disabled students who preceded you through the educational ranks and who have set the stage for your participation, accommodations for students with disabilities are relatively commonplace today.

The How, Where, and What of Choosing a College

HOW do you decide among the many colleges and universities available to you? Your first step in choosing a college is to ask yourself some basic questions about ***How Prepared*** you are (academically and socially) for the challenges that college has to offer, ***Where*** you want to study, and ***What*** you want to study when you get there. Going to college is a major step in your life. It means achieving new levels of responsibility and independence. There are some high school seniors who are more ready than others to manage that independence — disability may or may not have anything to do with preparedness!

Ask Yourself: "How Independent am I?"

1) What is the longest period of time I have ever lived away from my home/parents (including summer camp, extended vacations, etc.). Do I want to stay near my family or be some distance away?

2) Do I know how to manage my finances? Can I make deposits, write checks, and balance a checkbook?

3) How much experience have I had budgeting my money? Have I become used to a regular budget and managing with that amount between pay periods?

4) How much experience have I had in doing my own laundry? Shopping for clothes, supplies, and other things I need?

5) How much experience have I had managing my own time? Do I rely on my family or teachers to make me "hit the books," or am I able to budget my own time between the things I want to do and the things I need to do?

6) Can I make arrangements for my own commitments and amusements? Am I used to making my own appointments (business and/or social)? How independent am I in ***Getting*** to those appointments?

The answers to these questions may indicate that you need some experience in becoming more independent before you go too far from home. By all means, work out some plans with your parents to help you learn to do some of these adult activities. Be aware, too, that many students learn these things as necessary — but they need confidence to do so. Work on that!

The answers to the questions above can help you to decide whether you want to look for a school close to home (same city? same state?) or farther away. At the same time, you should be thinking about the ***Size***, and the ***Cost*** of the school you want to attend. Look into the advantages and disadvantages of school size, cost, program, and length of study by reading one of the regular college choice books in the list of Selected Resources (at the end of the book), suggested by your school counselor, or found in your library at school or in the community.

Ask Yourself: "Where Do I Want to go to School?"

1) What size school is most comfortable for me? How big was my high school? A larger college means more opportunities may be available but it also may mean there is less individual assistance. Am I assertive enough to get what I need in a larger, more impersonal system?

2) What are my financial limitations? I am going to need money for tuition, housing, and living expenses. How much money is available to me per year to pay for those things? (More about seeking out sources of financial assistance is found on p.13 .) What type of school can I afford? State institutions are usually less expensive than private ones, and tuition for schools in your state is usually less than tuition at an out-of-state institution. On the other hand, small private institutions offer an attractive individualized approach and often provide financial aid not available elsewhere.

KEN WILLIAMS/COLORADO STATE UNIV.

After you have narrowed your thinking about the right size and reasonable cost for you to consider in a given geographic area, you are ready to look at the academic requirements and offerings of the schools that fit those general guidelines.

Ask Yourself: "What do I Want to Study?"

1) What do I enjoy in high school? What classes do I do well in and which are less interesting to me?

2) What occupation/work do I want to pursue when I finish college? Do they offer a major in that area at the schools I am considering?

3) What are the entrance requirements for these schools? Do they have specific requirements for grade-point-average, SAT and/or ACT scores? How does my academic record and class rank compare with their stated requirements? Many college guides state the median SAT or ACT score for entering freshmen.

Upon reflection about the questions so far you may decide that pursuing a college degree is not what you want at this point in your life. Do consider other ideas: vocational or career schools where you can learn a particular trade or business, a job in the community using the skills you already have, military or alternative service (job corps, church-sponsored, etc.), or taking one or two courses in your community school, for example.

If you determine that college is what you want, you should be able to narrow down the list of places that you think you might like to attend to a **Select List** of schools that you need to review in more detail. We suggest that you limit this list to about a half dozen institutions.

Now That I Have My List of Schools — What Next?

Now you are ready to begin considering the special factors that are disability-related. The information that follows is meant to assist you in finding the best setting for you in college ***After*** you have completed the investigations and thought about the ideas in this general introduction. When you have narrowed your list to a workable number of schools that you ***Think*** you might be interested in attending, ***Then*** you are ready to start asking the questions that may be related to your disability and any special needs you have. There are six sections in this manual, organized along the same lines as the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that you and your school counselors have been working from at the high school level:

SECTION I

Present Level of Performance — Before you are ready to approach someone at a college on your **Select List**, you need to take stock of your own skills/abilities and needs; you cannot be sure that the school will meet your specific needs unless you have clearly defined what those needs are. This section will help you to create an organized description of your personal academic standing.

SECTION II

Goals — While some of the decisions to be made about your college career have already been considered during your initial search, there still is merit in taking some time to outline your personal and professional short-term and long-term goals so that you can better judge the relative importance to you of facilities and opportunities offered at different campuses.

SECTION III

Specific Support Services — This section focuses on the support services necessary for you to be successful in a postsecondary setting. Hints are provided on how to track down the person(s) on each campus who are in a position to discuss with you the accommodations available. There are examples of specific questions you should ask that person at the campus(es) on your **Select List.**

SECTION IV

Participation in Programming — Going to college means more than attending classes and taking tests. There is much to be learned and experienced in postsecondary education outside the classroom. In examining each of the campuses on your **Select List**, you need to look at the accessibility of non-classroom experiences for you if you should decide to attend. This section is designed to help you investigate such experiences in an organized manner.

SECTION V

Timelines — Aside from the application and acceptance deadlines that all students face, handicapped students may need to think about additional time needed to assure special housing, financial assistance, specialized equipment/services, etc. Moreover, some disabled students find that their special needs may limit the number of courses they can successfully complete in a given quarter/semester, thus stretching out the total time needed to earn a degree. This section is designed to help you establish realistic timelines for your participation in postsecondary education.

SECTION VI

Evaluation Process — Having completed the tasks set out in the first five sections, you should now have all the information necessary to weigh your options and make some decisions about where you will go to college. This section is designed to help you organize and prioritize information so that you can make an informed decision.

Academic Preparation:

In high school, you may have had special classes or resource room teachers for certain subject areas because of your disability. In college, you are not likely to find such special arrangements. You will be matched with your non-disabled peers, sitting side-by-side in the classroom and expected to compete academically. The instructors will assume that every student in the class has similar educational background and experiences. If you come into your classes with less-than-complete academic preparation, you will be at an immediate disadvantage. ***Now*** is the time to review your preparation and make an honest appraisal of your current knowledge, skills, and abilities.

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SECTION I
PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

Ask Yourself: "How Prepared Am I Academically?"

(You may need to work with your parents and/or high school counselor to answer these questions fairly.)

1) Did I take all the same courses in high school as my non-disabled peers who were preparing for college (i.e., the same number of courses in math, science, foreign language, English, history)?

2) If I covered some subject areas in a special class or with the help of the resource room teacher, did I get the same experiences as everyone else? Did I do the same assignments, participate in the same laboratory exercises, have the same opportunities to use a computer, and learn the same body of information as everyone else?

3) How much time do I currently spend receiving individualized help from a tutor or resource room teacher? In what subject areas? What kind of help am I used to receiving in these individualized sessions?

4) How good is my vocabulary and what is my reading level?

5) What kinds of tests am I used to taking to assess what I have learned? Multiple choice? Essay tests? Oral exams? Do I do better with some kinds of tests than others?

6) How many term papers have I written? How well did I do? Do I know the process for gathering and organizing information for such a paper?

7) Are there any areas in my academic background in which I feel weak or may need to take some remedial coursework?

Recognize that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Different campuses may provide different amounts of support in any or all of the areas mentioned (from tutoring to adaptive testing, to mandatory study hours in the dorm). These questions are posed here simply to help you assess your level of preparation as you begin to look at the schools on your **Select List** and see what they have to offer that complement and supplement your current strengths by providing the support services you will need.

If an honest assessment indicates that you are not now ready for college work, it is far better to spend some time catching up than to risk a possibly disastrous experience.

Some students never recover from a bad start and either compile a bad record or drop out vowing "never again." A post-high school year, "prep" program, or summer institute may be an option for you.

In the introductory segment of this manual, you were asked to do some thinking about your career goals and the areas which you think you may want to study. Statistics indicate that typically, students change their majors ***At Least*** twice during their college careers. It is helpful to have an idea of what you want to do, but you should not feel bound to any decisions you make now, or hampered by your lack of decision. Part of the purpose of going to college is to allow you to explore your options and your interests. The career-related goals that you set out for yourself may have to do with pursuing a chosen field or finding a chosen field!

Some of the goals you set for yourself at this time also may have to do with your growth in other areas. You will find that there is much to be learned from the experiences available to you in and out of the classroom as you pursue a higher education.

SECTION II GOALS

Ask Yourself: "What Are My Goals?"

1) Do I know what I want to major in when I get to college?

If the answer is "yes," how much do I really know about that field? Is there a way that I can get experience in my field (inside and outside the classroom)?

If the answer is "no," what things can I do while I am at college that might help me to find something that interests me? How do I go about exploring my options?

2)When I DO decide on a major, I want to be able to actively pursue a job in the area when I graduate. Are there any experiences I can gain while I am in college that will help me to determine what job accommodations can and should be made for me?

3) Have I identified any areas of academic weakness? Are there some remedial courses I should take to prepare me to go on to other things?

4) How ready am I to be out on my own? Could I set some short-term goals for now that have to do with learning to manage my own affairs, and wait until I have mastered those before I get ready to really strike out on my own?

5) What are my social goals while I am in college? What kind of people do I hope to meet in school?

6) What activities and clubs have I participated in? What are my hobbies?

KENT STATE UNIV.

Now you are ready to think about your disability-related needs and those support services that may be necessary for you in order to be successful in college. The first step is to track down someone on each campus on your **Select List** who can answer the very specific questions you need to ask. Don't assume that the folks in the Admissions Office, or even in the general Counseling Office are going to have the information you seek. They may ***Think*** they know what is available on campus, but the only way you can be sure that what you need will be there when you need it is if you talk specifically to the individual(s) who will be providing those support services to you when you arrive on campus. How do you find the right person?

SECTION III
SPECIFIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Most campuses will give you an opportunity to identify yourself as a student with a disability at some point during the admissions process. There may be a place to check on the application blank, or with the information sent to you ***After*** your acceptance concerning housing, athletic events, etc.

If the college invites you to identify yourself as a student with a disability and in need of accommodation, it is to your advantage to let them know as quickly and completely as possible. By law, ***Your Disability Cannot be Used to Discriminate Against You in the Admissions Process.***

In high school, the school district was responsible for providing any and all support services you needed to encourage your full participation in the educational process. The college/university ***Does Not*** have the same legal obligation. They are required, by law, to provide any reasonable accommodation that may be necessary for you to have equal access to educational opportunities and services available to your non-disabled peers ***If You Request Them.*** The college is under no obligation to seek you out to see if there is something you may need. This is your chance to make contact with the people on campus who can and will provide the support services you need. ***You*** must seek them out — they are not likely to come looking for you!

The people responsible for providing support services to students with disabilities on college campuses have different titles and work out of different offices from campus to campus. Ask for the Disabled Student Services Office, or the Office for Handicapped Students. If those inquiries do not succeed in helping you find the right person, contact the college's 504 Compliance Officer through the Affirmative Action Office and ask ***That*** individual for a referral to the appropriate office for support services.

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Once you have identified the responsible individual(s) on that campus, the questions you ask should be ***Very Specific*** and based on the needs you have. Colleges will vary in how much support they provide, but seldom will the level of support equal that which you received in high school. Listed below are examples of questions for people with several types of disabilities. Put together your own list of things to inquire about ***Before*** you make contact with this individual. Remember, you are free to ask about both the accommodations that you ***Must*** have and the things that would ***Be Nice*** to have available. Later, you will put this information together with all the other information you have gathered and weigh the things that are and are not available. For now, do not be afraid to ask about extras, as well as necessities. ***Remember:*** These are only samples of the kinds of questions you might be asking.

A Student Who Uses A Wheelchair Might Ask:

1) Is there an adapted transportation system available on campus? Is there adapted transportation available to me off-campus?

2) Are there any buildings on campus that are not accessible? Are the campus bookstore, the main library and the Student Union accessible? How about the counseling center, the sports arena, the health services, etc.?

3) How are classes scheduled? How do I make sure that I can get from one class to another in the time allotted and that my classes are scheduled in accessible classrooms?

4) What kind of accommodations are available to me for taking tests since my disability interferes with my ability to write quickly or in small spaces?

5) Do some of the buildings have elevators that operate with keys? How could I get a key to those elevators in buildings I use frequently? Will I be able to open the doors to these buildings by myself?

6) I am going to have my own accessible van on campus — is there special parking available? How do I become eligible to use that parking?

7) Is there adapted housing available through the residence hall system? What kind of adaptations have been made? Are all the public areas in the residence hall accessible?

8) I need a personal care assistant (PCA) to help me mornings and evenings. Who is responsible for recruiting the attendant — you or me? Who is responsible for training the attendant — you or me? Who will pay for the PCA — you or me?

9) Where and how can I get repair services for my wheelchair?

10) What recreational facilities are there available for me to use on campus?

11) Would I get academic and career counseling here in your office or from the general counseling offices on campus?

12) What other services are provided for someone using a wheelchair on this campus?

13) What are my responsibilities in assuring the services I need?

NOTE: Actually visiting the campus of your choice before planning to attend is a good idea for all students but should be considered an ***Absolute Must*** for students with mobility impairments. The only way that you can be sure that the degree of accessibility available meets the degree of accessibility you need is to go and see it for yourself. If possible, schedule enough time to eat a meal, sit in on a class and, perhaps, stay overnight. Look at the dorm room you may be occupying to make sure you can reach the light switch and get to the bathroom. Travel from the residence hall to the center of campus. Are there adequate curb cuts to allow you to move around the campus easily, or do you have to travel twice as far as others? Would you have to cross busy streets in very short time spans? The only way you can know that the campus is accessible to ***You*** is to go and try it out for yourself. Visits with currently enrolled students with disabilities can be invaluable.

A Student With a Hearing Impairment Might Ask:

1) How do I make arrangements for notetakers in my classes? Who does the scheduling, how are notetakers recruited, how are they paid, etc.?

2) Who makes arrangements for interpreters? Are interpreters available for non-classroom activities? Will I get priority (early) registration for classes?

3) What systems do your signing interpreters use? Are there oral interpreters?

4) Do you have infrared listening systems available for my use in any of the classrooms?

5) Is there a TTY/TDD available to me on campus? Can I call your office on my TTY/TDD if I need a message relayed to a professor on campus?

6) Do any of the televisions in the dorms have closed-captioning?

7) What kind of accommodations are available to me for taking tests since my disability may interfere with my ability to understand oral instructions?

8) What other services and/or programs are available in the community for someone with a hearing impairment?

9) Would I get academic and career counseling here in your office or from the general counseling offices on campus?

10)What other services are provided for someone with a hearing impairment on this campus?

11) What are my responsibilities in assuring the services I need?

NOTE: When you visit the campus, be sure to arrange a meeting with another hearing impaired student if there is one. Find out how that student manages.

UNIV DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

A Student With a Learning Disability Might Ask:

1) If I am having trouble with my classes, is there tutoring available? Who pays for tutors? How do I arrange that?

2) Reading is a problem for me — can I get my textbooks, tests, handouts, etc., recorded on tape?

3) Can I get extended time for taking tests? How is that arranged?

4) I have problems with mathematical calculations. Can I use a calculator in my math classes?

5) I have a lot of trouble with essay tests — is it possible for me to take those orally?

6) Is there someone available to help me with my written work — to proofread assignments, write out essay tests to my dictation, etc.?

7) Would I get academic and career counseling here in your office or from the general counseling offices on campus?

8) What other services are provided for someone with a learning disability on this campus?

9) What are my responsibilities in assuring the services I need?

A Student With a Visual Impairment Might Ask:

1) I will need my textbooks, tests, handouts, etc., put on tape — how do I make those arrangements?

2) I would like to have a reader — who is responsible for finding, training, scheduling, and paying someone to help me out? What are my responsibilities?

3) What kind of arrangements are there for me to take my tests with a reader and with someone else writing down my answers? How do I arrange to type or tape my answers?

4) What kinds of adaptive equipment are available here on campus for my use? Are there talking calculators? Is there an Optacon? Visualtek machine(s)? A Kurzweil machine? Talking terminals in the computer center? How many other people will be using these adaptive devices? Will I have trouble getting access to them when I need them?

5) What kind of assistance is available to me when I need to use the library for research purposes?

6) Am I elegible to ride the adaptive transportation system? Is there someone who will give me orientation and mobility training?

7) Are there any special arrangements I need to make to take my dog guide with me around campus and to have him living with me in the dormitory?

8) Would I get academic and career counseling here in your office or from tne general counseling offices on campus?

9) What other services are provided for someone with a visual impairment on this campus?

10) What are my responsibilities in assuring the services I need?

A Student With a Health Problem Might Ask:

1) Walking long distances is very difficult for me. Can I get a permit to allow me to bring my car on campus and park closer to the buildings in which my classes are held? Am I eligible to use the adaptive transportation system on campus?

2) What medical support is available to me on campus? Will I have access to a nurse who can administer my medication? Can I get access to a refrigerator on campus in which I can store my medication? What information should I send to the health service?

3) My medication schedule is such that I must rest for a least an hour twice a day; is it possible to arrange for someplace to lie down?

4) Is it possible to arrange my classes so that they will not interfere with my medical treatment schedule? Will I have access to priority (early) registration?

5) Would I get academic and career counseling here in your office or from the general counseling offices on campus?

6) What other services are provided for someone with chronic health problems on this campus?

7) What are my responsibilities in assuring the services I need?

Note that the last three questions are the same regardless of the type of disability you have. Recognize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions. Asking them merely gives you additional information to use in making your final decision. Don't forget to ask what other services they provide — they may have special opportunities available that you never would have thought to request. Sometimes special opportunities are available on one campus and not another because of a special community interest in individuals with disabilities, or because of a pet project of someone in the campus community. When you have exhausted your own list of questions, remember to ask "what else is there?"!

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There are many things that happen on the college campus that have nothing to do with textbook learning or classroom experience. Participation in extra-curricular activities and social interactions are also part of the "growing" that goes on during your college years. You should not feel obligated to participate in outside activities, but research shows that a reasonable level of involvement can enhance a student's self-confidence and enhance the chances of success during and after graduation. It would be nice to know that the opportunity to participate is open to you if you *do* have the desire to become involved. In much the same manner you assessed your need for classroom accommodations, you should evaluate the kind of accommodations necessary for you to be included in such activities and then ask some very direct questions.

SECTION IV PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMMING

Ask Questions Such as These:

1) Are the extra-curricular activities (lectures by guest speakers, dances, receptions, political rallies) accessible to me?
NOTE: For the student with a mobility impairment, this question may refer to architectural access of the setting for such events; for a student with a hearing impairment, it may refer to the availability of interpreters; each student must assess his/her own access needs.

2) There are social fraternities and sororities on this campus. Will I be able to participate in these organizations if I want to? Are they accessible to me?

3) I might be interested in working on the school newspaper (or being a member of the photography club, or working in student government, etc.). Are these opportunities accessible to me?

4) Where are the major off-campus social gathering spots? Where is the primary shopping area for students living on campus? Are these places accessible to me?

5) What are my responsibilities in getting access to any or all of these things?

ROD REILLY/RIT COMMUNICATIONS

SUE WEISLER/RIT COMMUNICATIONS

A major consideration in determining when you can begin your college career and how long it will take you to complete a degree is financial assistance. If all or part of your costs will be paid for by someone other than yourself and your parents, you need to know how much support you can get from outside agencies. You also need to know how you become eligible for such support, how soon you can begin to receive it, and what restrictions there are on the use of this money. Some scholarships are available to students based on academic potential ***Regardless*** of their parents' financial standing. Others are based on both merit and need. Student loans can be arranged based on need, and often student employment is available on campus for those needing to supplement their funding. We encourage you to investigate scholarship and financial support opportunities through the college's Financial Aid office, just as other students do.

SECTION V

TIMELINES

Many students with disabilities are eligible for some financial support through their state's Vocational Rehabilitation Services Agency. If you have not made contact with someone from this agency to determine the possibility of their financial support, you should investigate this source immediately. The appropriate agency is known by different names in different states (for example, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Occupational Rehabilitation Services, the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, or the Bureau of Services for the Blind — specifically for students with visual impairments). There may also be money available to you for support of your education through the Social Security Administration — they have various programs available to individuals with disabilities. You can find those offices in the telephone book under the listing for State Agencies. Support from either of these agencies may carry some restrictions with it; you may be limited in the amount of money you can make outside of their support (thus limiting your chances of holding outside employment), but IF you are eligible for services through such agencies you may find many of your financial problems resolved. The paper work involved in getting your name on the rolls of agencies can require months to complete. Begin investigating the necessary procedures ***Now*** so that your entrance to the college or university of your choice is not delayed.

UNIV. OF WISCONSIN/MADISON

Aside from financial considerations, there are other issues which may have an impact on when you can begin your college career. You are responsible for the same deadlines for application as other students. However, if you need specialized accommodations because of your disability, you may not be able to begin your schooling on very short notice — it may be necessary for you to give the institution advanced knowledge of your intention to enroll so that they can assure the availability of support services. Whether it is recruitment of interpreters or readers, or the availability of textbooks on tape, such arrangements can take some time to complete satisfactorily. ***As Soon as you*** have decided on a college, you should contact the appropriate office on that campus, inform them of your plans to enroll, and discuss the support services you will need to function academically on that campus. Be prepared to take the responsibility of initiating this contact with the support service provider(s).

How quickly you can complete your degree is as dependent on outside factors as it is on your own determination. Some forms of financial aid are available only if you are enrolled as a full time student. Some are available only for a specified period of time, thus putting the emphasis on completing your studies in the briefest possible time.

In other cases, you may ***Not*** wish to attempt a full class load because of an existing physical condition which limits your energy, encroaches on your time, and leaves you with fewer hours for study than your peers. In such cases, it may take you longer to complete the same course of study than it takes your non-handicapped peers who are attending classes full time. How strenuously you will pursue your studies should be something that you decide as you go along, with the help of your counselors and advisors. Do not feel that you must meet strict deadlines for yourself at this point in your academic career.

You began your search by narrowing down your choice of colleges to a Select List based on the size, location, and academic programs in which you were interested. You also created a listing of your goals in pursuing a higher education. Armed with those two lists, you are now ready to sit down and evaluate your options based on the information you have collected on the campuses you are considering. First review your list of goals and organize that list in your mind based on the importance ***To You.*** Students will have very individual preferences as to what is to be considered ***Most Important*** and ***Least Important;*** no one can make those decisions for you!

SECTION VI EVALUATION PROCESS

It may be that after you prioritize your list of goals, the choice of colleges becomes immediately obvious to you because only one school fulfills your primary concern or only one school truly meets your needs in the areas you feel to be most important. You will probably not find a school which meets 100 percent of your needs in *all* areas. Perhaps the best way to make your decision is to make listings of all the information you have collected on each campus, using the same format for each school, and then lay those lists side-by-side. Compare the lists, consider your own priorities and special needs, and evaluate which one comes closest to what would be best for you.

Ask Yourself These Questions About Each School on Your List:

1) How good is my academic background compared to the students with whom I will be competing?

2) What academic support services are available to me on this campus? How does the availability of support match up with my support ***Needs*** as I outlined them in Section I?

3) What will the living situation be for me if I go to this school?

4) What kinds of non-classroom experiences are available to me on this campus?

5) What are the possibilities for financial assistance if I attend this school?

Often the availability of good ***Academic Support*** is the prime consideration in making a decision regarding schooling. If you cannot manage to compete with your peers academically and get good grades, you will not be around long enough to worry about extra-curricular activities. For individuals who have severe restrictions on their physical capabilities, the availability of a suitable living situation must outweigh the consideration of "extras" available for classroom support. Those with ***Very*** limited funding available may find it necessary to consider financial support even before academic considerations — if you can't afford to pay tuition you really don't need to worry about the kind of academic support available to you!

GREG BECKER/MARY COLLEGE

A Final Word...

Any important decision cannot be based on a single factor. Thus, to decide on a college solely on the basis of your disability is to do yourself a great disservice. We believe it is your ability, interests, and individuality which should be the major considerations in choosing a college. There are many quality schools which have solid academic programs and good supportive services. Your task is to plan ahead, ask questions, seek out the information you need and make a wise choice. There are many resources available to you. This manual is intended to be just such a resource. There is a listing given at the end of this booklet of some other books and organizations that might be helpful. You also have your parents, your school counselor, and your friends.

Choosing a college is one of the most important decisions you will make because it determines a direction your life will take. It is a challenging process and one that can help you grow in self-awareness. A successful choice is the result of knowing yourself, reviewing your options, and putting it all together in a final selection that is just right for ***You.*** We have provided some of the information to help you make that final selection. Now the choice is yours. Good Luck!

SELECTED RESOURCES

College Planning Search Book, published by the American College Testing Service (ACT) contains a 48 page section on Planning which addresses college characteristics such as location, size, and cost. It includes a comprehensive college index for both two year and four year colleges and universities. Check with high school counseling office or the book is available by prepaying $6.00 to ACT Publications, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa 52243.

College Times and ***Going Right On,*** two newspapers published by the College Board, are distributed annually to high school counselors. They each address various aspects of planning for and choosing a college for high school students. ***College Times*** features a College Information and Planning Guide and personal tips about how to gather information, write an essay, and succeed once in college. ***Going Right On*** provides general information about choosing a college, financial aid, and planning after college. There is a planning calendar for both juniors and seniors in high school. Contact high school guidance counselors or public librarians for a copy of either newspaper. For ordering information, contact Communications Division, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10023-6917.

Guide to the College Admissions Process, published by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), defines terms commonly used, describes how to use college catalogues, what is in an admissions folder, and other essential aspects of this crucial topic. This booklet may be available from high school guidance counselors, or may be ordered by prepaying $2.00 each from NACAC, 1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 430, Alexandria, VA 22314. Contact NACAC for bulk ordering information.

Small Colleges Can Help You Make It Big!, published by the Council of Independent Colleges, graphically describes the benefits of earning a degree at a small liberal arts college. The booklet is generously laced with quotations and testimonials from such famous small college alumni as Ronald Reagan, Steve Bell, Leslie Stahl, Margaret Heckler, Paul Newman, and Al Jarreau. The booklet concludes with a state listing of colleges with 2,500 or fewer full time students. Single copies are free by request to the Council of Independent Colleges, One Dupont Circle, Suite 320B, Washington, DC 20036.

The publishers of this ***Guide for the Student with a Disability*** each has a publications list of pamphlets, papers, and booklets which may also be of interest to readers. Contact information is inside the front cover of this Guide.

AHSSPPE

P.O. Box 21192
Columbus, OH 43221

Developed by: Jane Jarrow, Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education
Bonnie Baker, American School Counselor Association
Rhona Hartman, HEATH Resource Center
Richard Harris, Ball State University
Kay Lesh, University of Arizona
Martha Redden, American Association for the Advancement of Science
Judy Smithson, Illinois State University

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